



Utah Department of Health
Laboratory: 801-965-2561
Epidemiology: 801-538-6191
Updated: 8/16/2012

Guidelines for Influenza Sample Submission

Unified State Laboratories: Public Health (USLPH) offers limited influenza testing (both for seasonal and H3N2v). These tests are offered at no charge since they are used for public health surveillance purposes. Currently, testing is available for:

- Hospitalized patients
- Ill patients with an epidemiologic link to recent swine exposure
- Select other cases (such as outbreak characterization), as authorized by the Utah Department of Health's (UDOH) Bureau of Epidemiology

USLPH uses a real time PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) testing protocol and kit provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). CDC and FDA have authority to deny us the use of these kits if USLPH does not follow rules of use. Complying with the following steps will ensure that testing will be completed in a timely, legal, and scientifically sound manner.

In order to ensure that testing is completed and results are reported promptly, the following criteria are required for samples to be tested at USLPH for influenza by PCR. Specimens that do not meet the following criteria will be rejected.

Specimen Collection:

Only approved sample sources will be tested. USLPH can NOT conduct any off-label testing.

Currently approved sample sources are:

- Nasopharyngeal swabs (NPS)
- Nasal swabs (NS)
- Throat swabs (TS)
- Nasal aspirates (NA)
- Nasal washes (NW)
- Dual nasopharyngeal/throat swabs (NPS/TS)
- Bronchoalveolar lavage (BAL)
- Bronchial wash (BW)
- Tracheal aspirates (TA)
- Sputum
- Lung tissue
- Viral culture isolates from patients with signs and symptoms of respiratory infection

Follow specimen collection device manufacturers' instructions for proper collection methods. Swab specimens must be collected using swabs with a synthetic tip such, as Dacron® or nylon, and an aluminum or plastic shaft. Respiratory specimens should be collected and placed into Viral Transport Media (VTM) as described by CDC and WHO guidelines.

Specimen containers must be labeled with patient identification and collection date. If a sample container is not labeled, the sample cannot be tested.

The following will result in rejected specimens/no testing:

- Swabs with calcium alginate or cotton tips
- Swabs with wooden shafts
- Dry swabs
- Specimen not refrigerated/frozen
- Incomplete specimen labeling
- Incomplete documentation
- Insufficient specimen volume (<160 µl)

Specimen Storage:

Specimens should be stored and transported refrigerated at 2-8 ° and transported on wet ice to USLPH within 48 hours of collection. Alternatively, specimens may be frozen. Frozen specimens should be transported on dry ice to avoid freeze-thaw cycles.

Appropriate Documentation:

Provider Code must be provided. You will not receive results if the Provider Code field is empty. We suggest that you mark your provider code on a test request form and then make copies for use throughout the season. If you need assistance finding your provider code or setting up a provider code, please call USLPH at 801-965-2400.

Please ***mark the correct sample source*** on the test request form (sample sources listed above are the only approved sources for this test). Questionable sample sources cannot be tested.

Specimen containers must be labeled with patient identification. If a sample container is not labeled, the sample cannot be tested.

Specimen collection date must be provided.

Test request forms must be completely filled out with the following required information in order for testing to be conducted. [Download the test request form.](#)

- Patient Name
- Patient Date of Birth
- Patient Age
- Patient Sex
- Patient County (not country) of Residence
- Patient State of Residence
- Provider Code
- Specimen Collection Date
- Specimen Source/Site
- If patient is hospitalized
- Facility where patient is hospitalized

The previous practice of USLPH calling providers for information if criteria are not met has been discontinued.

Specimen Transport:

Specimens should be stored and transported refrigerated at 2-8 ° and transported on wet ice to USLPH within 48 hours of collection. Alternatively, specimens may be frozen. Frozen specimens should be transported on dry ice to avoid freeze-thaw cycles.

Package the specimen with the completed test request form. Keep the test request form separate from the specimen (specimen transport bags usually have a separate pocket for paperwork). Follow the appropriate packaging and shipping guidelines from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Shipping through private courier, UPS, FEDEX, or other over-night delivery service is recommended.

We are dedicated to providing the best service possible and value your assistance in assuring these criteria are met.